

Boys-This Cheery Paper will help  
you through the *New Year!*

# The POPULAR

EVERY TUESDAY.

2<sup>d</sup>

Week Ending  
January 7th, 1925.

New Series  
No. 607.



**William George Bunter,**

The Fattest and Funniest  
Schoolboy in the World.  
Meet him inside.



## TROUBLE FOR TEXAS LICK!

Texas Lick thinks it very clever to "skin" a sharper who had set out to cheat him at cards—but it is not regarded in the same light by Jimmy Silver & Co., and they are not slow in showing the Texan what they think of him!



THE FIRST CHAPTER.  
Lick Looks for Trouble!

"WHERE'S that ass Lick?" It was Arthur Edward Lovell who asked, or rather growled, that question. Arthur Edward was rather fed-up with Texas Lick, the cheery and self-confident youth from Texas.

It was a bright, cold January day; woods and fields were white with snow. The Rookwood party, who were staying with Jimmy Silver for the vacation, had been tramping that morning, and they had turned into a country inn for lunch.

After lunch Texas Lick had strolled away, leaving the Fistical Four of Rookwood to themselves; for which relief they were duly thankful. A rest from Master Lick's incessant "chin-wag" was very welcome.

But now Jimmy Silver, Lovell, Raby, and Newcome were ready to start for home, and Lick was not to be seen.

"Where is the ass?" said Lovell. "Nosing into something that doesn't concern him, I suppose—that's his way!"

"Let's look round for him," suggested Jimmy Silver mildly.

"I've looked round!" grunted Lovell. "Well, let's look round again, old chap."

And the Fistical Four proceeded to look through the inn for Texas Lick. There was a click of balls from the billiards-room, and Jimmy Silver glanced in at the half-open door of that department, though without expecting to see Texas Lick there.

But there he was! Two visitors to the Golden Apple Inn were at the table, and Texas Lick was looking on.

"Come out of that, Lick!" bawled Arthur Edward Lovell.

Lick glanced round. "I guess I'm watching this hyer game," he answered.

"Bother the game! We're ready to go."

"Waal, I guess I ain't stopping you!"

"Look here, Lick—"

"Oh, guff!"

Lick turned his attention to the table

again. Apparently he was interested in the game that was going on.

"My hat!" murmured Raby, with a nod towards the player who was handling the cue. "That's Carthew!"

"Carthew, by Jove!" said Jimmy Silver. It was Carthew, of the Sixth Form at Rookwood—a prefect at the school, with whom Jimmy Silver & Co. were scarcely on good terms. However, it was vacation now, and a prefect of the Rookwood Sixth was nobody in particular. Having failed to make a cannon, Carthew dropped the butt of his cue to the floor, and glanced round as he heard his name mentioned. He scowled at the Fistical Four.

"What do you fags want here?" he grunted. "Get out of it!"

"Go and eat coke!" retorted Arthur Edward Lovell promptly.

"What?" roared Carthew. "Coke!"

And Lovell marched in, and his comrades marched in after him. At Rookwood School, Carthew wielded the power of the asphalt, and was a fellow to be avoided. In vacation he had no terrors for the Fourth-Formers; and Lovell was quite keen on making that fact clear to him.

"If you don't get out—" began Carthew.

"Put us out!" suggested Lovell cheerfully.

Carthew made a step towards the juniors, and stopped. The Fistical Four grinned at him cheerfully. They were quite prepared to use Carthew as a duster for dusting the floor of the room, and there was no doubt that they could have done it quite easily, big Sixth-Former as Mark Carthew was.

So the bully of the Sixth thought better of it, and turned his back on the chums of the Fourth.

"Get on with it, Punter!" he grunted.

Carthew's companion was chalking his cue. He was a rather slight man, with a black moustache and shifty, sharp eyes, and a thin-lipped mouth like a gash. He looked like a seedy sporting man, as no doubt he was.

He proceeded to run out in a single break, and Carthew, muttering some-

# TOO CLEVER By HALF!

A SPLENDID LONG COMPLETE STORY OF JIMMY SILVER & CO., THE CHUMS OF ROOKWOOD.

By Owen Conquest.

thing under his breath, threw a pound note on the table.

"Another game?" asked Punter.

"No."

"Then we may as well be getting along."

"You get along," said Carthew. "I'll join you later, Captain Punter."

"Just as you like."

Captain Punter buttoned his coat, and with a careless nod to Carthew, strolled out of the inn.

Carthew looked at the juniors. "Will you kids clear off?" he snapped.

"Not until we choose!" answered Lovell independently. "We're not at Rookwood now, Carthew! Go and chop chips!"

"Come on, Lick," said Jimmy Silver. But Lick did not stir from the billiards table. Carthew, taking no further heed of Jimmy Silver & Co., turned his attention to Texas Lick. Evidently there had been talk between the two before the entrance of Jimmy and his chums.

As Lick was the cheekiest junior at Rookwood, and had no respect whatever for the high and mighty Sixth, it was probable that Carthew's feelings towards him were not cordial. But the bully of the Sixth was aware that Lick was the son of a Western millionaire, and had an allowance of pocket-money that caused other fellows at Rookwood to stare. At Rookwood the prefect could hardly have taken Lick up in any way; but he was many a long mile from Rookwood now, in the Wiltshire village in the holidays.

"I guess I don't mind," Jimmy Silver & Co. heard Texas Lick's drawing voice. Carthew had been speaking to him in a low tone, unheard by the chums of the Fourth.

"Oh, just fifty up!" said Carthew.

"I guess it's a kindness of you—you being a prefect and a Sixth-Former and all that," said Lick.

Carthew gave a cough.

"Well, it's vacation now," he said. "I shan't have to rejoin my friend for half an hour or so, so I've got time."

"I guess I'm on."

Texas Lick selected a cue. Arthur Edward Lovell strode towards him in great wrath.

"Look here, Lick," he bawled, "do you think we're going to hang about while you play billiards in here?"

"Oh, guff!"

"Better come along kid," urged Jimmy Silver.

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"I guess I'm giving Carthew fifty up."

"Look here," howled Lovell, "Carthew is an old hand at this game, and he'll clean you out just as easily as his precious friend Punter did him."

"You cheeky young cub!" roared Carthew. "Get outside!"

"Rats!"

Carthew took a savage grip on his cue.

"Gentlemen, gentlemen!" exclaimed the marker.

"You guys can vamoose the ranch, if you like," said Texas Lick. "I guess I can walk home to your shebang on my lonesome, Jimmy. You ready, Carthew?"

"Yes."

"Quid on the game?"

"Here goes, then."

"Look here, Lick—"

"Give a galoot a rest."

And Carthew, having given a miss in baulk, Texas Lick played.

## THE SECOND CHAPTER.

### A Precious Pair!

**J**IMMY SILVER & CO. stood and looked on, in an uncertain frame of mind, and deep annoyance and exasperation.

Texas Lick was Jimmy's guest for the vacation—an exceedingly trying guest—but the fact made it difficult for Jimmy to speak plainly to him.

Jimmy was not disposed to depart and leave the American junior in the billiards-room, with Carthew, the black-guard of the Rookwood Sixth; neither was he disposed to stand idly and look on while the young rascal gambled.

Carthew, as the juniors were quite aware, had a habit of haunting billiards-rooms at a safe distance from the school in term time and in the holidays, doubtless, he "let himself go" to a still greater extent. The fact that he was going about with a friend like Captain Punter was proof of that. A good many mis-spent hours had given Carthew considerable skill with the cue, and the Fistical Four knew perfectly well that he was setting out to fleece the Texan.

Lick had plenty of money, and seemed prepared to lose it; and that was good enough for the black sheep of Rookwood.

It was easy to guess that Carthew's precious friend, the captain, had relieved him of a good deal of his pocket-money; and for that reason Carthew had let him depart alone, intending to indemnify himself at Lick's expense.

Whether Lick lost him ample dollars or not did not worry Jimmy Silver very much, but he had a very strong objection to the present rather shady proceedings. A harmless game on the billiards-table at Priory House was very different from playing for money in an inn. Jimmy felt responsible for his guest, in a way; yet it was scarcely possible to take him by the scruff of the neck and run him forcibly out of the Golden Apple.

"Well, are we going?" grunted Lovell angrily.

"Let's wait a bit for Lick," answered Jimmy. "Carthew will run him out in ten minutes, most likely."

"And bag his money!" snapped Lovell.

"Serve him right, so far as that goes."

"Well, that's so," agreed Lovell. "I don't suppose he's ever handled a cue before."

Texas Lick, certainly, was not playing very well. He made a few clumsy cannons, and potted the white once or

twice. The Fistical Four and the greasy marker fully expected to see Carthew run him out quickly; but, for some reason, Carthew was playing badly.

The marker grinned. Carthew had been beaten by the captain, but the marker had seen him put up a better game than this. What the marker saw at once dawned on Jimmy Silver a little later. Carthew was letting the transatlantic youth win—a sprat to catch a whale. It was not a solitary pound note that he designed to capture from the Texan.

Lick's score went up by twos and threes, slowly; Carthew's score barely kept pace with it. Carthew, at 48, was left with an easy cannon, which he missed. Lick gave a chuckle.

"I guess it's my game now," he said. And so it was. He went in off Carthew's ball, and it was game. Lick gave a chirrup of glee.

"I guess I can play billiards!" he chortled. "Like to have another game, Carthew?"

"Oh, yes, if you like," said Carthew. "I've got to rejoin my friend—we're going on to Winchester this evening. But I'll play you fifty up for a five-pound note if you like."

"Done!"

"Look here, Lick—"

"Oh, give a galoot a rest."

Jimmy Silver & Co. could do nothing but look on when the new game started. They were perfectly well aware of Carthew's game—he had allowed Lick to win a pound to encourage him, and he was going to run him out quickly enough with a fiver for the stake. It served Lick right, there was no doubt about that; and with all his transatlantic sharpness he seemed quite unaware of it.

Lick gave a miss in baulk this time, and then Carthew started scoring.

As he intended to capture the Texan's fiver without waste of time, he did not delay matters by pretended poor play. He went in to win, and did his best.

A series of cannons was followed by the potting of the red three times in succession, and then Carthew went in twice off the white, and finally potted Lick's ball. By the time he finished he had made thirty-five out of the required total of fifty.

Texas Lick whistled.

"I guess you are some player," he remarked. "You've put up a better show this time, Carthew."

"Try to do the same," suggested Carthew, with a grin.

"Sure!"

Texas Lick started.

As he proceeded, the chums of the Fourth opened their eyes, and Carthew's expression grew quite startled.

There was no more clumsy play on Lick's part.

He began with a cannon, and left the balls easy for another cannon. Cannon followed cannon, with an incessant clicking of the ivory, and each time the balls were left in a favourable position. Ten cannons in succession made the marker stare.

"Oh gad!" murmured Carthew.

Jimmy Silver burst into an involuntary laugh. He was very far from approving of Lick's proceedings, but he could not help laughing. It was not, after all, Carthew who was the deceiver; it was Texas Lick. He was at least twice as good a player as the Sixth-Former. Evidently he had played billiards a good deal in his native State of Texas.

The red went in, and the marker spotted it again, and Lick sent it in again. Five times he sent it in.

"Oh gad!" said Carthew again.

"My hat!" said Lovell. "The fat-head can play billiards, unless this is a series of giddy flukes."

Texas Lick glanced round with a grin as he chalked his cue.

"Flukes be blowed," he said. "We've got a billiards-table in the ranch-house in Texas, and I guess I've played on it since I was high enough to reach it. I guess I've made breaks that would make you open your eyes to see 'em. I'm going out in this."

"You—you spoofing young rotter!" muttered Carthew. "You were puttin' on that you couldn't play for toffee."

"So were you!" grinned Lick.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Carthew gritted his teeth. He realised now that while he had been leading on the Texan, Lick had been leading him on, and that he had fallen blindly into the trap.

Lick continued to score.

Jimmy Silver & Co. watched him with interest. Every shot was made with cool precision, and every shot told. Without an effort Texas Lick ran out in a single break of fifty.

He grounded his cue, and chuckled.

"I guess you owe me a five-pound note, Carthew," he remarked. "I'll play you double or quits if you like."

Mark Carthew was not likely to accept that offer. He had no chance against Lick, and he knew it. He turned away with a black and scowling brow, and Texas Lick picked up the five-pound note, and fluttered it boastfully before the eyes of Jimmy Silver & Co.

"You galoots care for a game?" he chuckled. "I guess I'll give you sixty in a hundred."

"Oh, come out of this, you shady wastrel!" growled Lovell. "Look here, I'm not hanging on here any longer!"

And Lovell strode out.

"I guess I'm coming!"

Texas Lick followed the chums of Rookwood chuckling. Evidently he was exceedingly well pleased with the result of his contest with Carthew of the Sixth.

## THE THIRD CHAPTER.

### Generous!

"**T**HIS way!" said Lovell.

Texas Lick halted.

"I guess that isn't the way home," he said. "That's the way to Hadley village, you guy!"

"That's right."

"But we're going home."

"Not just yet."

Texas Lick gave the Fistical Four a sharp and suspicious look. He realised that something was "on," though he did not quite guess what it was.

"I guess I ain't great on walking," he said. "Gimme a hoss and I'll ride you a hundred miles. But Shanks' pony isn't good enough for me. Let's get home."

"We've got to go to the village first."

"What for?" demanded Lick.

"You'll see when you get there. Come on!"

Arthur Edward Lovell took Lick's right arm, and Raby took his left. They started off towards the village with him, and Texas Lick had no choice about going. Newcome followed on behind, but Jimmy Silver took the road to his father's house.

"Look here, what's this game?" demanded Texas Lick, wriggling as he was marched away. "Where's Jimmy gone?"

"Home," answered Lovell. "You see, you're Jimmy's guest, so he doesn't think he can treat you as you deserve. But you're not my guest, nor Raby's,



nor Newcome's; so we're free to deal with you. As you've grown so jolly sharp on the other side of the Atlantic I dare say you can understand that if you try hard."

"If this is a rag—"

"Not at all! Come on!"

Texas Lick walked on between the two juniors, feeling and looking very uneasy. Once or twice when he lagged Newcome let out a foot and dribbled him onward, and Texas Lick gave up lagging.

In a short time they reached the village, and, to Lick's amazement, stopped outside the Cottage Hospital.

"Here you are!" said Lovell.

at Rookwood," explained Lovell. "It's one of the things that are not done."

"Oh, guff!"

"If you want to play the shady goat, you must do it in some other company," further explained Lovell blandly. "When you're with nice boys like us you have to keep decent—or as decent as possible. Catch on to that?"

"Leggo!"

"Now, having played the ox and the blackguard, the only decent thing you can do is to shove that fiver into the box for the Cottage Hospital. That's what you've come here for, I think."

"I haven't come here; I was brung

yet!" said Raby. "We're going on bumping you as long as you have Carthew's fiver about you!"

Bump!

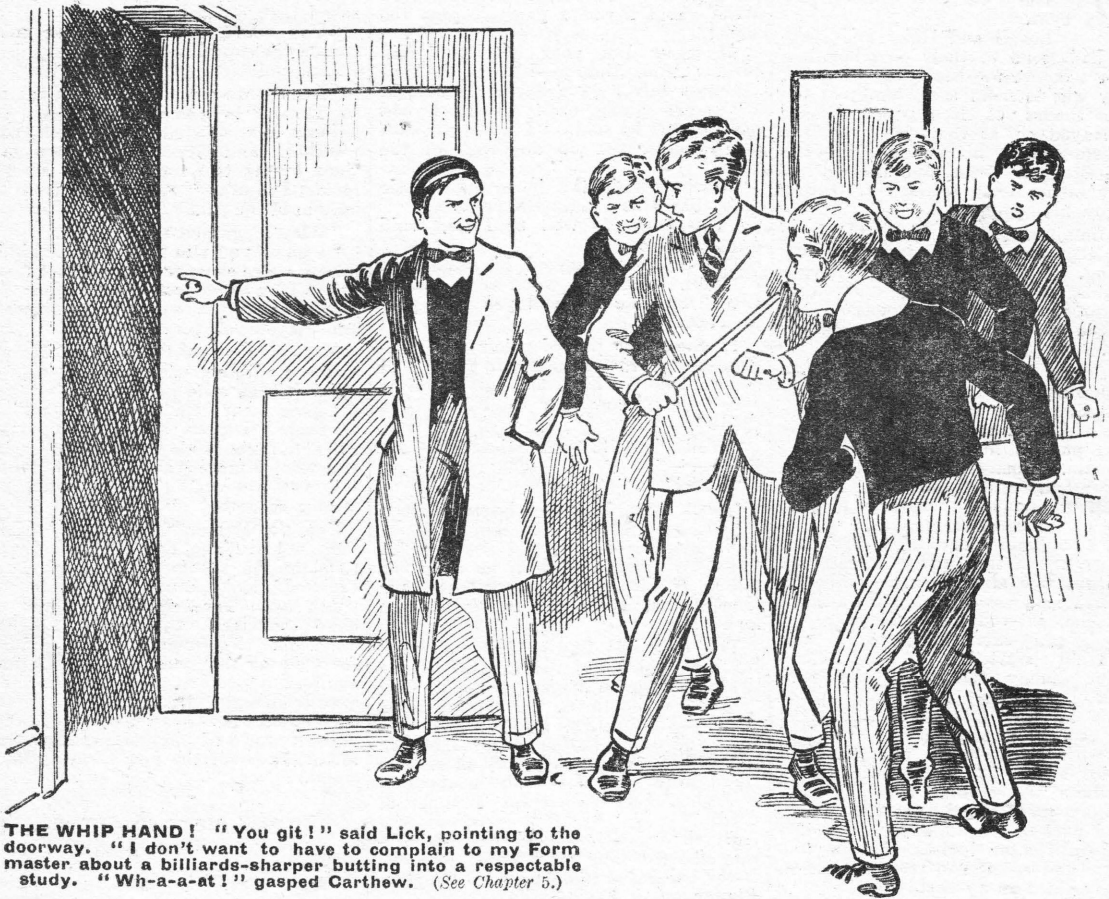
"Ow-wow-w-w-w!"

Bump!

"Stop it!" howled Texas Lick, quite desperate now. "I—I—I guess I'll pony up the fiver! I—I—I guess I meant to all along! Ow! Wow! Yow!"

"Of course, suit yourself!" grinned Lovell. "If you contribute that fiver to the hospital you'll do it entirely of your own accord and your own free will."

"Yow-ow-ow!"



**THE WHIP HAND!** "You git!" said Lick, pointing to the doorway. "I don't want to have to complain to my Form master about a billiards-sharper butting into a respectable study." "Wh-a-a-at!" gasped Carthew. (See Chapter 5.)

"What does this mean?" howled Lick. "What the thump have you brought me here for, you guys?"

Lovell tapped the collecting-box affixed to the wall of the building.

"Contributions urgently required," he explained.

"I guess you won't catch me contributing to any gol-darned old hospital!" snorted Texas Lick. "I sure reckon I know better how to look after my dust!"

"Aren't you putting in five pounds?" asked Lovell.

"Five pounds!" yelled Lick.

"Just that!"

"Nope! I guess I ain't putting in a Continental red cent!" roared Lick, in great indignation. "Let go my arms, you guys, or I sure guess I'll mop up the burg with you!"

"Never mind about putting in a Continental red cent—whatever that may happen to be!" grinned Lovell.

"You've got a fiver about you that you won from Carthew."

"I guess I'm freezing on to it."

"You see, we're down on gambling

by you guys, I guess! And I ain't putting in a single dime!"

"You're not contributing?"

"Nope!"

"Well, it's a free country," said Lovell. "You can do exactly as you like, of course."

"Sure!"

"And so can we, of course!"

"Eh?"

"And at present we are going to bump you!" said Lovell.

"Look hyer— Yarcooop!"

Bump!

Texas Lick sat down in the snow—hard! He roared as he sat. He was jerked up again and bumped again, and he roared still louder.

"Oh, Jerusalem crickets! Oh-yooop! Carry me home to die! Ow! Yow!"

"Give him another!"

"Help!" yelled Texas Lick.

Bump!

"Oh, great snakes! Ow!"

Bump!

"Yarcooh! Let up!" shrieked Texas Lick. "Oh, you guys! Oh, you jays! Oh, you pesky mugwumps! Yoooop!"

"My dear chap, we're not finished

The five-pound note rustled in at the slit in the lid of the collecting-box—probably the only one it had ever received. Texas Lick gave a groan as it vanished. It seemed to affect him a good deal like having a tooth out.

"Now, that's what I call generous!" said Lovell admiringly. "You are free with money, Lick, and no mistake!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, you mugwumps!" groaned Lick. And he turned and tramped away towards Jimmy Silver's home, followed by three chuckling juniors.

Not a word did Texas Lick speak on the way back to Priory House.

The juniors came in rather late for tea, and Jimmy Silver met them with a smiling face.

"You are a little late," Mrs. Silver remarked at the tea-table.

"Well, it was really Lick made us late," said Lovell blandly. "He would walk down to Hadley to put five pounds into the box for the Cottage Hospital."

"Dear me!" said Mrs. Silver, in surprise. "That is a very large contribution!"



"A very generous one!" said Cousin Phyllis, with quite a kind glance at Texas Lick.

"Lick's a generous fellow," said Lovell.

Texas Lick said nothing; he could not trust himself to speak just then.

The following day Arthur Edward Lovell and Texas Lick both turned up for lunch with damaged noses. Each explained that he had run his nose against something hard—as undoubtedly they had.

#### THE FOURTH CHAPTER. The Swindler Swindled.

"OUR train!" said Jimmy Silver. The vacation was just over.

Lovell and Raby and Newcome had gone to their own homes a few days before the beginning of term; Jimmy was to meet them again in the classic shades of Rookwood. Texas Lick stayed on at the Priory till the new term started—his home being in the far-off State of Texas, and nobody but Jimmy Silver being anxious or willing to enjoy his company.

So Jimmy and Texas Lick started for school together, in the frosty winter morning. There were several changes of trains, but at last they arrived at the express for Latcham Junction.

"Come on, Lick!" called out Jimmy Silver.

Lick was busy with an automatic chocolate machine on the platform. He was finding scope for his keen transatlantic genius in an attempt to extract several packets in succession with the same coin. Jimmy caught him by the shoulder and bundled him to the train. He had no sympathy whatever in such efforts of transatlantic genius.

The two juniors entered a first-class carriage, which they had to themselves. The train was almost starting when a slim man in a bowler hat, with a black moustache, entered the carriage.

The guard slammed the door, and the train started. At the same moment Jimmy recognised the man in the bowler hat and black moustache. It was Captain Punter, the shady sporting man whom he had seen with Carthew of the Sixth in the billiards-room at the inn—in whose delectable company the Rookwood prefect had apparently spent a good part of his holidays.

Captain Punter looked at the two juniors, and seemed to recognise them. He gave them an agreeable nod.

"I've seen you young gentlemen before," he remarked.

Jimmy Silver nodded without speaking; he was very undesirous of entering into talk with a character like Captain Punter. But Texas Lick was quite affable.

"I guess so," he said. "You were with Carthew, who belongs to our school. Know him quite well, what?"

"Quite an old friend of mine," said the captain. "You young fellows going back to school?"

"You've got it," said Lick.

"So you belong to Rookwood?" said the captain affably. "It's a pleasure to meet you. I'm an old Rookwood man myself."

Jimmy Silver frowned. He did not believe that statement; and certainly he did not want to believe it. Captain Punter was not a gentleman who would have reflected credit on any school. Jimmy had bought a "Holiday Annual" with him to help pass the journey, and to rescue him from the conversation of Texas Lick. He now retired behind it, leaving Lick to talk

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to the racing sharper if he chose. Lick evidently did choose.

He was soon chatting away quite freely with the captain, telling him about Rookwood School, and his impressions of the Old Country, and the immense superiority of the United States, especially the unequalled State of Texas. Captain Punter "drew" him cheerfully, letting the Western youth's irrepressible chin wag incessantly. In an absent-minded sort of way, the captain took a little case from his pocket and produced a pack of cards. He glanced at his watch as the express whirled through a station.

"Another half-hour to Latcham," he remarked. "This is a non-stop run. What about a round game to pass the time?"

"I guess I'm your antelope," said Lick. "You, Jimmy—"

Jimmy Silver gave him a stern look. "You're going back to Rookwood now, Lick," he said. "I warn you that you'd better not do anything of the kind."

"Pooh, what's the harm in a little game like this?" said the captain.

"You know as well as I do," said Jimmy Silver.

The captain shrugged his shoulders.

"Well, what do you say, Master Lick?" he asked. "Did you ever play in Texas?"

"I guess I've played poker with cow-punchers on the ranch," said Lick. "Of course, I ain't what you'd call a player. But I jest know how to handle the cards."

"Well, just to pass the half-hour before—"

"Sure!"

"Look here, Lick—" began Jimmy. "Oh, give us a rest!" said Lick.

Jimmy Silver frowned behind his "Holiday Annual," but he said no more. If Lick insisted upon asking for trouble with a sharper, it was his own look-out.

The captain's bowler hat was used for the "pot," and the captain having dealt, the game began. Texas Lick "drew" three cards, the captain drew only one. Shillings dropped into the hat, and then half-crowns, and then ten-shilling notes. In a very short time there were several pounds in the pot, and then Lick called for a show of cards.

He showed a full hand, and the captain showed four of a kind; and the latter being the stronger hand, Captain Punter raked in the stakes.

"I guess you've got me beat!" remarked Texas Lick. "Cut!"

He shuffled the cards, and the captain cut them, and Lick dealt. Then the stakes rained into the hat again.

Lick was playing recklessly, or at least seemed to be doing so. Captain Punter covered every stake as he put it up.

The captain held four of a kind again, and they were four aces. On a hand like that the captain was prepared to take risks.

Lick glanced at his cards several times, and appeared doubtful. Each time, however, after hesitating, he put up a new stake, which the captain promptly covered. As no "limit" had been fixed, and as Lick raised the stake every time, there was soon a large sum in the hat.

"I guess I'll go you a quid!" said Lick at last, and he threw a pound note into the hat.

The captain covered it.

"Five!" said Lick, and a crisp five-pound note rustled into the pot.

Captain Punter hesitated at that. But

he covered the stake, and called for a show-up.

"Four of a kind and a king!" he remarked, turning up his cards.

"A straight flush!" said Lick nonchalantly, showing a sequence of five cards of the same suit, from queen down to eight.

The captain's jaw dropped. With almost lightning swiftness, Lick reached for the stakes and annexed them.

"Your deal!" he said blandly.

Captain Punter took the cards, showed them back into the case, and put the case into his pocket. Then he fixed a deadly look on Texas Lick.

"You young scoundrel!" he said.

"Gee-whiz! What's bitin' you now?" asked Lick innocently.

"You planted that hand on me!" roared the captain.

Lick chuckled.

"I guess we get our eye-teeth cut out in Texas," he remarked. "Why, you galoot, I've played cards with cow-punchers and Mexican greasers ever since I was two foot high! Do you reckon I didn't see you dealing from the bottom of the pack?"

"What?" gasped the captain.

"I guess you was sharp, but I kinder reckon we're sharper in the States," said Texas Lick complacently. "I guess I've played you at your own game, captain, and played you for a sucker!"

The captain rose to his feet. He was almost trembling with rage.

Texas Lick eyed him coolly.

"Keep your temper, old scout!" he advised. "I guess if you cut up rusty I'll call a constable at Latcham! Do you want a magistrate to hear all about the way you make money when you meet a schoolboy in a train?"

Captain Punter sank back into his seat. Until the express drew up at Latcham he sat and glared at Texas Lick. If looks could have slain, the youth from Texas certainly would not have survived to reach Latcham Junction. Fortunately, looks couldn't. As soon as the train stopped Captain Punter jumped out, and disappeared at once from sight. Texas Lick and Jimmy Silver followed. They found themselves amid a crowd of fellows gathering from all quarters for the new term at Rookwood.

#### THE FIFTH CHAPTER. Barred!

"SHIFT!"  
"Eh?"  
"Shift!" repeated Jimmy Silver.

Texas Lick blinked at him.

"What's biting you?" he asked.

"I'm fed-up with you," said Jimmy Silver quietly and deliberately. "It may seem all right to you, Lick, to gamble in a train with a shady black-guard, and to cheat a sharper. It's not Rookwood style. I'm fed-up with you, and I want you to keep your distance this term. Is that plain enough?"

Texas Lick grinned.

"I guess you put it plain," he assented. "But what are you getting mad about? That galoot started out to skin me, giving me a false deal from the bottom of the pack. I let him run on, and skinned him. I call that fair and square."

"It may be called fair and square in Texas, but it won't do for Rookwood," granted Jimmy Silver. "So shift, and leave me alone."

"Oh, come off!" urged Texas Lick.

"Hallo, Jimmy!" bawled the powerful voice of Arthur Edward Lovell from the other end of the platform. And Jimmy

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scudded along to meet his chums, leaving Texas Lick to himself.

"Gee-whiz!" murmured Lick.

He shrugged his shoulders and moved away in the crowd. Jimmy Silver joined Lovell and Raby and Newcome, and they moved off for the local train for Coombe, the station for Rookwood.

"Where's your giddy pet?" asked Lovell.

"Do you mean Lick?" grunted Jimmy Silver. "He's about somewhere. It's rather awkward about his being in our study at Rookwood. I want to keep him at arm's length this term. He's too clever by half for me!"

Lovell chuckled.

"After having him home for Christmas?" he said. "Well, I told you at the time that you were a thumping ass, Jimmy; you can't deny it."

"Oh, rats!" said Jimmy.

Texas Lick was not seen again before the Fistical Four arrived at Rookwood School. For some time after that they were too busy to think about him at all. There were plenty of things to attend to on the first day of term. Among other things was a meeting with Carthew of the Sixth. At Rookwood, Mark Carthew was once more a powerful personage, invested with the power of the asphalt, and he proceeded to make the Fistical Four realise it. They were putting things to rights in the end study when Carthew of the Sixth looked in, with his cane under his arm and an extremely unpleasant expression on his face.

"Oh! So you're back, what?" greeted Carthew. "I think I remember coming across you kids in the vacation, and you checked me."

"Well, we're at Rookwood now, Carthew," said Jimmy Silver mildly. "Let it rest."

"Quite so; we're at Rookwood now," agreed the bully of the Sixth. "Of course, I'm not going to take any notice of anything that happened in the hols. But you kids have been ragging with the Modern fellows already, since you got back, and we can't have fags kicking up a shindy on the first day of term. Bend over!"

Carthew swished his cane.

The Fistical Four drew together and eyed Carthew warily. They did not intend to "bend over" and take a licking from the Sixth Form bully. But it certainly was the case that they had been "ragging" with the Moderns, and that Carthew was a prefect and entitled to take official note of such lawless proceedings.

"You hear me?" rapped out Carthew.

Texas Lick strolled into the end study as he was speaking. Carthew gave him a black look. He had not forgotten his unfortunate encounter with the sharp American at billiards.

"You gettin' on the war-path already, old man?" grinned Lick. "Look hyer, you get out of this study!"

"What!" roared Carthew.

"Don't I speak plain? Absquatulate—vamoose the ranch—git!"

"Why, I—I'll—" gasped Carthew.

"You git!" said Lick. "I don't want to have to complain to my Form master about a billiards-sharper butting into a respectable study."

"Wha-a-at?"

"But if you don't vamoose, you know what to expect."

Carthew eyed the Texan, and Lick eyed Carthew. The bully of the Sixth lowered his cane and gritted his teeth. He understood that Lick, as a matter of fact, held the whip-hand. That incident of the holidays required to be buried in oblivion.

"You catch on?" asked Lick cheer-

fully. "I guess you ain't bulldozing in this hyer study, Carthew. Not while this infant is hyer. You jest git! Don't jaw, but git!"

The Fistical Four burst into a laugh. The expression on Mark Carthew's face was quite entertaining at that moment.

The bully of the Sixth was evidently yearning to jump at Texas Lick and lay the cane about him right and left. But he did not venture to do so.

With a black brow he strode out of the study. The next moment there was a wild yell in the passage. Carthew had come upon Tubby Muffin there. Tubby had given no offence, but he was within reach, and that was enough for Carthew. The Sixth Form bully strode away to the stairs, leaving the hapless

## THE RIO KID— THE BOY WHO NEVER MISSES HIS TARGET!



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Muffin wriggling from a hefty lash of the cane, and spluttering with surprise and indignation.

Texas Lick gave a chuckle.

"I guess I made that bulldozer climb down," he remarked. "Why, he wouldn't dare to let the Head guess how he passes his time in the vacation."

The Fistical Four did not answer Lick. It would never have occurred to them to hold that incident over Carthew's head, and certainly they would not have dreamed of giving him away, much as they disliked him.

Lick stared at them.

"Lost your voices?" he asked sarcastically.

"Yes, as far as you're concerned," said Jimmy Silver bluntly. "Look here, Lick, I spoke to you plainly enough at Latham. We'd take it as a favour if you'd change out into some other study this term."

"I guess this study suits me."

"You don't suit us!" said Lovell.

"That cuts no ice with me," said Texas Lick coolly. "But what's the matter with you galoots? What's biting you?"

"You know jolly well!" said Raby angrily. "Peele's study would suit you. You can play cards there, and the lot of you can welsh one another as much as you like. It's not good enough for this study."

"Oh, that's it, is it?" said Lick.

"You kinder object to the way I skinned that old galoot in the train, Jimmy?"

"Yes."

"I reckon you're a jay. I've played poker ever since I was big enough to sit up and hold the cards."

"Well, we don't play poker in here," said Lovell. "If you stay in this study you'll be sent to Coventry!"

"That means that you won't talk to me, what?"

"Yes, it does."

"Then I guess I'll freeze on to this study," said Lick cordially. "If you won't talk while I'm here, I guess this study will be a bit more comfortable than it was last term."

And Texas Lick strolled out of the end study with that remark, leaving Arthur Edward Lovell speechless with wrath, and his chums grinning.

### THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

#### Sent to Coventry!

JIMMY SILVER & CO. were in earnest.

In the opinion of the Fistical Four, Texas Lick had passed the limit, and they were done with him.

They had been very patient with the youth from the wild and woolly West—even Arthur Edward Lovell had been patient. Jimmy had even taken him home for Christmas, in the kindness of his heart. They had stood his incessant "chin-wag," they had tolerated his derogatory descriptions of everything and everybody in the Old Country. They had made every allowance for his "wild and woolly" ways. But there was a limit, and it had been reached. The incident of Captain Punter and the game of poker was the finishing touch.

Texas Lick was sent to Coventry by the end study.

There was no reason, so far as the Fistical Four could see, why he should not change into another study where he would have been welcome. Peele & Co. would gladly have taken the millionaire's son into their shady fold. If he did not choose to go, that was his own look-out. In the end study he was ignored.

For the first two or three days Lick treated the matter as a joke. He prided himself upon his exceeding sharpness. He seemed, indeed, incapable of understanding that there was anything wrong in his conduct. "Skinning" a sharper who had set out to "skin" him seemed to Lick an exploit of which he was entitled to boast. He did not take the Fistical Four's attitude seriously at first.

But after a day or two he became restive.

Talking was, to Texas Lick, one of the prime necessities of life. As



eating was to Tubby Muffin, so was "chin-wag" to the loquacious youth from the West. Certainly, Lick preferred to do most of the talking himself. He seldom listened to what was said to him. The pauses in his conversation were chiefly for the purpose of taking breath. But even Lick could not find a lasting pleasure in talking to fellows who never opened their lips in reply, and whose faces remained as expressionless as wooden images.

Outside the study Lick's society was not sought after. He was regarded as a bore. His one topic—the immense superiority of the United States to the mouldy old island in which he now sojourned—was not particularly interesting to inhabitants of the mouldy old island. Nobody was anxious for the benefits of Lick's enlightening conversation. And so the sentence of "Coventry" in his own study began to bear heavily upon him.

"I guess you galoots are trying to freeze me out of this study!" he exclaimed indignantly, on the third day at tea-time. "You reckon you'll make me git! Is that the game?"

No answer.

"Can't you speak?" bawled Lick.

Dead silence.

"Look here, Jimmy Silver—"

Jimmy Silver poured out his tea sedately, as if unconscious of Lick's presence in the study. Lick glared at him, and then glared at Arthur Edward Lovell. Lovell stared at his plate.

"Look here, Lovell—"

"Pass the jam, Raby," said Lovell.

"I spoke to you!" hooted Lick.

Lovell seemed deaf.

"I say, Raby, old chap—"

"About the match with the Moderns on Saturday, Jimmy?" said Raby.

"Look here, I ain't standing this!" howled Texas Lick. "Why, you fellows are making me feel as if I were in a deaf-and-dumb asylum. I'm fed-up with it, I can tell you!"

"Kick-off at two-thirty, Raby," said Jimmy Silver, ignoring Lick. "I fancy we shall beat the Moderns all right."

Texas Lick sat and glared at the Fistical Four. They continued their conversation on the subject of the Modern football match, and the interrupting voice of Texas Lick passed them by like the idle wind which they regarded not.

Texas Lick rose from the table at last.

"You ain't freezing me out of this study," he declared. "I'm hanging on! Got that?"

The end study might indeed have been a deaf-and-dumb asylum for all the acknowledgment Lick's remark received. He stamped angrily out of the study, and slammed the door with a slam that rang the whole length of the Fourth Form passage.

Then the Fistical Four broke into a chuckle.

"The dear old gasbag is getting fed," remarked Arthur Lovell. "He will burst soon!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Indeed, Texas Lick was getting a feeling that he was in danger of bursting with pent-up loquacity. The next day he returned to the charge. He came into the end study for prep, having had tea in Hall, where the silence was not so oppressive.

During prep Lick made incessant observations, not one of which was

answered, or apparently heard. Wooden faces met his gaze whenever he looked at any member of the Co. He grew more and more restive.

"Look hyer, this joke has gone far enough," he said at last. "It's time to chuck it!"

No reply.

"Jimmy Silver!" bawled Lick.

Jimmy did not speak.

"I'll jolly well punch your head if you don't answer me!" roared Lick, in great excitement.

A faint grin glided over Jimmy's face, but otherwise he appeared to be stone deaf.

Texas Lick jumped up.

"I mean it!" he howled.

Stony silence.

Texas Lick whipped round the table and rushed at Jimmy Silver. Jimmy jumped to his feet, so did his chums, as if moved by the same spring.

Four pairs of hands were laid on Texas Lick.

He was swept from the floor, struggling and yelling, and bumped on the study carpet—hard!

Then he was carried bodily out of the study and bumped on the floor of the Fourth Form passage, still in deep silence.

Leaving him sitting in the passage, in a rather dishevelled and breathless condition, the Fistical Four returned into their study and closed the door. Then they grinned at one another, while the voice of Texas Lick was heard outside.

"Ow, ow, ow! Wow! You jays! You mugwumps! Wow!"

The door reopened and Texas Lick glared in.

"Look hyer, you guys—" he roared.

The Fistical Four jumped up again. Lick was collared in the doorway and bumped in silence—silence on the part of Jimmy Silver & Co., though by no means on the part of Texas Lick. The voice of Lick could be heard in every study in the Classical Fourth. Fellows looked out of their study doorways and chuckled.

With closed lips the Fistical Four bore Texas Lick along the passage, bumping him at every few paces, till they reached the staircase. He was finally bumped down on the landing and left there, and the juniors walked back to their study.

This time Lick did not return, and the end study saw no more of him till

bed-time. In the Fourth Form dormitory he gave them a glare which they did not seem to see.

The "cutting" of Texas Lick was a standing joke in the Classical Fourth by this time. But the hapless Lick found it no joke. He stood it for one day more, and then, after a silent tea in the end study, he opened negotiations as it were.

"You galoots have got me properly," he said, almost plaintively. "I guess I'm ready to call it off, if you are."

Deep silence.

"What do you want?" demanded Lick desperately. "Look hyer, you don't want to keep up this game. Can't you answer a galoot?"

Apparently the Fistical Four couldn't. At all events, they didn't. The "galoot" remained unanswered.

Texas Lick breathed hard.

"I'll do anything you gol-darned-well like if you'll call off this game," he said.

Jimmy Silver looked at his chums. Then he took a stump of chalk from the table-drawer. Still without speaking, he chalked on the glass:

"Will you promise?"

"I'll promise anything you like!" said Texas Lick, in desperation. "Give it a name!"

The Fistical Four grinned. Jimmy Silver proceeded to chalk the conditions of peace on the glass.

"Never touch a card again so long as you stay at Rookwood."

There was a pause.

"Is that all?" asked Lick at last.

Jimmy Silver chalked again.

"Own up that you're a disgrace to the study."

"Nope!" roared Lick.

Jimmy took a duster and rubbed the chalk from the glass. He resumed his seat in a dead silence.

"Look hyer—" said Lick.

The Fistical Four did not "look there." The sentence of Coventry was still in full force.

Texas Lick glared at them.

"I guess I'll promise not to touch a card," he said. "I don't see the point, but if you make a point of it, there you are. I promise, you ornery galoots!"

Silence.

"That all?" said Lick persuasively.

Jimmy Silver shook his head without speaking.

There was an inward struggle in Texas Lick. But he realised that he could stand "Coventry" no longer; he had to talk or burst.

"I—I—I guess I own up!" he stutered.

The Fistical Four waited silently.

"That—that—"

Pause.

"That—that—that I'm a disgrace to the study!" gasped Texas Lick.

The Fistical Four chuckled.

"All serene," said Jimmy Silver.

"Oh, you can talk now, can you?" growled Texas Lick. "I guess I've a jolly good mind to wade in and mop up the lot of you. Of all the gol-darned galoots that I've ever struck I guess you jays are gol-darnest. You make me tired."

"And now we let you talk again, I guess you'll make us tired," chuckled Arthur Edward Lovell.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And Texas Lick did.

THE END.

(There will be another topping long complete story of Jimmy Silver & Co., and Texas Lick, of Rookwood, next week, entitled: "TEXAS LICK TAKES THE LONG JUMP!")

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